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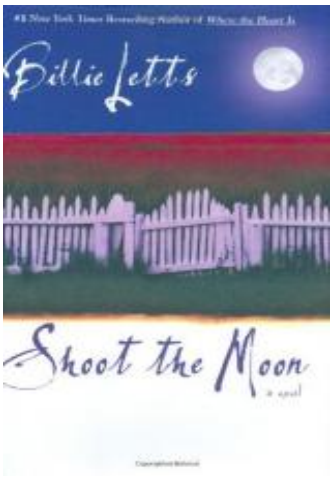
Shoot the Moon

by Billie Letts



About the Book

In 1972, the town of DeClare, Oklahoma, was consumed by the terrifying murder of Gaylene Harjo and the disappearance of her baby, Nicky Jack. When the child's pajama bottoms were found on the banks of Willow Creek, everyone feared Nicky Jack was dead, although his body was never found. Nearly thirty years later, Nicky Jack mysteriously returns to DeClare. His sudden reappearance will stun the people of DeClare and stir up long-buried emotions and memories. But what Nicky Jack discovers among the people who remember the night he vanished is far more than he, or anyone, bargains for. Piece by piece emerges a story of dashed hopes, desperate love, and a shocking act with repercussions that will cry out for justice...and redemption.

Full of the authentic heartland characters that Billie Letts writes about so beautifully, **Shoot the Moon** is a hypnotic tale filled with suspense and emotional truth. It further establishes Billie Letts as an American writer to be reckoned with-an original storyteller whose words go straight to our heart.

Discussion Guide

1. In her novels Billie Letts beautifully captures the personalities in Oklahoma's small towns. Do you think DeClare, Oklahoma could be "Any Town, USA" or is it uniquely a small town in the state of Oklahoma?

2. Key themes in this novel deal with the question of identity and self-knowledge. Mark Albright (Nicky Jack Harjo) doesn't know who he is. What does he learn about himself during the course of the story? Does he change in any fundamental way from the beginning to the end of the book?

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4. Do you find the love relationship between Ivy and Mark/Nicky Jack believable? Why or why not?

5. We get to know Gaylene, posthumously, through what other people say about her and through her diaries. Are the two views of her similar or different? Why does she call herself "Spider Woman"?

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7. What importance do you think race has in this novel: not much, some, or a great amount? What are some examples of racial discrimination faced by characters? Mark/Nicky Jack doesn't know he is part Cherokee. Is it important that he does know?

8. The book also raises some troubling issues faced by adopted children. What are they? Do you think an adopted child should be given his birth parents' identities? Why or why not?

9. Mark/Nicky Jack talks about having a careful plan for his life, and then fate dramatically changes that plan. He points out that Ivy has no plan at all, and she's drifting through life. What are the pros and cons of each character's approach to life? What is your own approach?

10. What do you make of the domino players? Why are they in the story? What do they contribute besides the title?

11. A frequent situation in the novels of Billie Letts is the dilemma faced by an unmarried pregnant woman about the child she carries. In this book, what choice does each of the unmarried pregnant women make with regard to her unborn child, and what are the consequences of that choice? Do you think each woman makes the best choice for her?

12. Because this is fiction, the author can create any ending she wishes for her characters. Do you agree with the fate she gives to each of the major characters? In particular, how do you feel about what happened to Carrie and her son Kippy? Are you convinced she would have taken his life along with her own?

13. Who would you say is the happiest or most "together" character or characters in this book? Why? Does "shooting the moon" make for happiness?

14. If there is someday a sequel about Mark/Nicky Jack and Ivy, what do you think might happen to them? Do you think their relationship will last?

Author Bio

Billie Letts is the author of numerous short stories. Her first novel won the Walker Percy Award and the 1996 Oklahoma Book Award. She lives in Oklahoma with her husband, Dennis.

Critical Praise

"Letts has shown once again her gift for capturing the personalities that inhabit Oklahoma's small towns-and some of the bigger cities as well."

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Publication Date: July 1, 2004
Genres: Fiction
Hardcover: 352 pages
Publisher: Warner Books
ISBN-10: 0446529001
ISBN-13: 9780446529006